

# **Minutes of the East Greenwich School Committee**

## **Budget Meeting**

**Tuesday, March 3, 2015**

**Archie R. Cole Middle School Library**

**100 Cedar Avenue**

**East Greenwich, RI 02818**

Those in attendance were Ms. Carolyn Mark, Chair; Mrs. Mary Ellen Winters; Mr. Clark Smith; Mr. David Osborne; Dr. Yan Sun, and Mr. Michael Fain. Dr. Deidre Gifford, Vice-Chair was absent. Dr. Victor Mercurio, Superintendent; Mrs. Gail Wilcox, Director of Administration; and Mr. Brad Wilson, Director of Student Services were also in attendance.

## **7:00 p.m. Budget Meeting**

### **I. Call to Order**

Ms. Mark called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

### **II. Public Hearing on the FY2016 Budget**

Dr. Mercurio provided a PowerPoint of the FY2016 budget. As requested, the Committee was provided with a list of potential reductions for FY2016. These reductions total \$1,060,409, a 2.5% reduction from the original proposed budget. Dr. Mercurio reviewed the potential list noting the rationale of the cuts and the potential impact in the classroom. Dr. Mercurio noted that several variables

(i.e. contractual obligations) were taken into account in drafting these cuts.

The two paraprofessional positions and the special education teacher (Frenchtown) are “proposed” positions, not existing positions. The Committee discussed delaying these new positions. The current school-nurse situation, one nurse per building was discussed, and how a reduction could affect students’ safety. A reduction would require nurses to travel to other schools and also have an affect on nurses that teach Health classes at the elementary level. Dr. Mercurio explained the role of the PBGR Coordinator and how this position is attached to part of a graduation requirement. Removing this position would require students’ to work through Senior Project on their own. The .20 FTE for Cole Chorus is a proposed FY2016 increase for Cole. The technology proposed cuts would eliminate all new programs/equipment in all schools.

The Committee discussed the implementation of full-day kindergarten, which is not included in the FY2016 budget. The equity model is the least expensive and would cost approximately \$140,000.

Dr. Mercurio explained that in order to institute the equity model, funds would need to be cut from existing programs. He added that it is a struggle to implement a new program for twenty students (all day-K) while reducing programs that affect three hundred plus students. The decisions should be made looking towards staff/programs with the most student impact over time. He also noted

that any suggested “start time” change is not included in the budget proposal.

Community members Mrs. Poier, Mrs. Daigle, Mrs. Colgan, Mrs. Larkin, and Mrs. Beirworth asked various questions regarding the budget. In response to questions posed by community members, Dr. Mercurio noted the Town Council cannot raise the tax levy over 4% and the school department can only request a maximum 4% increase over the prior year. It was also noted that transportation is contractual and bus runs have been added due to the increase in student population and the students being transported across district. By eliminating a half-day kindergarten run, the district could save \$128,000. School Committee policy delineates the radius for student walkers based on mileage and location. Transportation related to athletics has been altered over the past three years and various teams/sports have been sharing buses to events. The statewide transportation costs for students placed throughout the

state are not insignificant and are mandated costs. Dr. Mercurio discussed the ramifications (confidentiality, etc.) of having parents fill in for school office personnel. Roles of support staff have changed greatly over the years and the “to-do” list has grown as accountability has changed. Dr. Mercurio noted the Committee has not taken action on any of the all-day kindergarten proposals. In previous years, budgets were crafted with items that were vetted and incorporated into the proposed budget (i.e. grade three reconfiguration, 1:1 Chromebooks). This year the budget process began in December when the all-day kindergarten proposals were initiated.

The Committee discussed all-day kindergarten and the possibility of including the equity model. This model does not require any building changes. The district would probably qualify for \$15,000 from RIDE. The Committee discussed ranges of increases for the FY2016 budget and asked Dr. Mercurio to come back with various scenarios of a proposed budget including increases in the 3-3.5% range, a model of the all-day kindergarten proposal, reductions adding current staff back in (not newly proposed positions), justification for “newly” proposed items, and items that are too important to cut.

### **III. Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Fain, which was seconded by Mrs. Winters, the Committee voted 6-0 to adjourn at 9:26 p.m.

**CHRISTINE DIMEGLIO**

**SECRETARY**